

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
4201 WILSON BOULEVARD
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22230



April 14, 2010

Dear Colleagues:

As Director, I encourage all members of the wider National Science Foundation community to actively involve themselves improving our nation's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education enterprise by volunteering as part of National Lab Day.

A call to action, National Lab Day provides us all with the opportunity to give very precious gifts to students and teachers, the gifts of our time, our skills, and our experience.

Whether you can help a classroom teacher for a day to demonstrate science in action, donate several months worth of your time to help math come alive in a classroom, or lend your carpentry skills to building a better science classroom, the National Lab Day initiative, which officially commences on May 12, is designed to allow all of us at NSF, as well as those researchers whom NSF supports, to directly serve our students and teachers.

Actually, "National Lab Day" is not a particularly apt name.

For "National Lab Day" is neither just about "labs" in the brick-and-mortar sense, nor is it limited to a single day. It is a nationwide movement to support active, engaging teaching and learning. It is about encouraging, engaging, and inspiring children. It is about building long-term relationships between our STEM professionals and our K-12 classrooms.

In short, it is a wonderful opportunity for all of us in the wider NSF community, no matter what our background, education or skills, to make a difference in science, math or engineering education. It is also a great way for NSF grantees to begin to build the relationships that can evolve into opportunities to demonstrate the Broader Impacts of their work.

The National Lab Day Web site (www.nationallabday.org) provides a clearinghouse for teachers to express what they need to succeed in the form of “projects”; be that the help of a scientist mentor or in-kind contributions help with lesson plans or internships with scientists for their students. Teachers can ask for anything on behalf of themselves and their students, but, so far, what more than 90 percent of them have requested is to be connected with a scientist or other STEM-professional.

Once a teacher has posted a project to the site, scientists, engineers, mathematicians or anyone can respond and begin building relationships with that teacher and those students.

I am urging you to do just that.

I urge you to register on the Web site here:

<https://www.nationallabday.org/scientists/new> and join the effort to foster the next generation of scientists and scientific thinkers. Please note that when you do, use the pull-down menu on the page to note your affiliation with NSF.

I am proud of NSF’s institutional accomplishments in education. Through the education-research programs we support in the Directorate of Education and Human Resources, the discipline-specific educational efforts in other Directorates and Programs, and the commitment of our grantees, we are daily fulfilling our agency’s mandate to strengthen science and engineering education.

Even so, we can all do so much more to develop a skilled and competitive STEM workforce for the 21st Century, while expanding the scientific literacy of all citizens.

National Lab Day provides us a mechanism to do that on a very personal basis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Arden L. Bement".

Arden L. Bement
Director